

Can we Talk About That? Here?  
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Colossians 3:1-6, Philippians 4:8-9  
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- I. I once read a comment that today's teenage boy encounters more sexually stimulating content before he gets to school Monday morning than his Grandpa did when he went looking for it Saturday night, and I think it's true.
- A. We live in an immensely sexualized society.
1. A society that has thrown away the standards of sexual behavior upheld by the Judeo-Christian tradition for more than three millennia.
  2. A society that celebrates rather than censures the violation of sexual boundaries.
- B. And it's about time that we in the church begin talking about it.
1. Now it's a difficult topic to talk about because it seems risqué even to raise the issue.
    - a. Ought we to bring this topic into the sacred space of our sanctuary?
    - b. Indeed, many question, "Can we Talk About That? Here?"
  2. It's because this issue is so hard to address that so few pastors address it, and thus the church seems silent on this very critical topic.
  3. So I decided to include the issue of sexual boundary violations in my "We Smile on Sunday, But Come Monday..." series.
- C. I think that although many of us smile on Sunday, when Monday comes there are significant sexual boundary issues that we struggle with, or, maybe worse yet, don't struggle with when we should.
1. The desire for sexual pleasure constantly pushes us to violate boundaries.
  2. And it generally doesn't wait till Monday to do so. It's with us all the time.
- II. Now the first thing I want to do is to define my terms.
- A. As I use the term "sexual boundary," I'm referring to "a limitation God places upon our sexual behavior."
1. God has said, "This is how I intend for you to enjoy my wonderful gift of sexuality, and beyond this you are not to go."
  2. "These are things which you are not to do. You may not step over these boundaries."
- B. For over three thousand years the Judeo-Christian movement has maintained that the sexual boundaries established by God limit sexual expression to marriage.
1. Any sexual expression outside of that is sin. It is a violation of a God-given sexual boundary.
  2. The Judeo-Christian movement has maintained for these many hundreds of years that sexual boundary violations include:
    - a. Sexual contact between unmarried people—fornication.
    - b. Sexual contact between a married person and someone who isn't his or her spouse—adultery.
    - c. Sexual contact between people related to each other—incest.
    - d. Sexual contact between people of the same sex—homosexuality.

- e. Sexual contact between humans and animals—bestiality.
- 3. Going beyond that, the Judeo-Christian tradition has maintained that sexual boundary violations also include lusting after any of these things.
  - a. Lust is mentioned a number of times in the scriptures.
  - b. *Job says, I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. Job 31:1*
  - c. *Jesus says, Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:28*
  - d. *Paul says, Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Colossians 3:5*
  - e. Lust is a sexual boundary violation.

III. Now I'm going to divide sexual boundary violations into five categories.

- A. The first and worst of these categories is engaging in abusive sex in which one person forces sexual activity upon another for his or her personal pleasure with no concern about the experience of the other person.
  - 1. For the most part society still condemns this type of sexual activity.
  - 2. But there are individuals who claim the right to express their sexuality in this way.
  - 3. The worst of these expressions is the forcing of sexual activity on children which preys on the absolutely most vulnerable and can never be justified.
  - 4. Rape, date rape and spousal rape are other ways in which this boundary violation happens.
  - 5. This is the worst kind of sexual boundary violation imaginable, and we Christians dare not engage in behavior such as this.
- B. The second category of sexual boundary violation is engaging in "recreational sex" or considering such behavior to be acceptable.
  - 1. I'm defining "recreational sex" as the understanding that one can engage in sex freely with anyone/ at any time/ free of any moral considerations.
    - a. This understanding posits that the chief purpose of sex is to give us pleasure, and as long as sex is consensual and pleasurable to both parties there are no limitations.
    - b. This sense of license is generally expressed most freely by unmarried people unencumbered by any sense of marital fidelity—and it is expressed as a sense that you can hook up with anyone who is available and willing for your mutual pleasure.
    - c. A surprising number of married people also grant themselves, although often not their partner, the same freedom.
  - 2. Although we consider recreational sex to be a modern phenomenon, it's

surprising how common this behavior has been across the centuries despite the church's strongest teachings and prohibitions.

- a. In many situations people just looked the other way.
  - b. If pregnancy happened, as long as the couple was married before the baby came, things were okay.
3. What has changed in the last 50 years to cause an explosion in recreational sex has been the widespread availability of antibiotics to deal with sexually transmitted diseases, contraceptives and abortion to deal with the problem of unwanted pregnancy, the acceptance of single motherhood, and our willingness to allow men to abdicate any fatherhood responsibilities.
  4. But despite all these changes that seem to make recreational sex more acceptable, engaging in recreational sex is a violation of God's sexual boundaries, and we Christians ought to be observing those boundaries.
- C. The third category of sexual boundary violations lies in the area of pornography.
1. Pornography consists of actual, written, artistic, photographic, verbal or video depictions of nude or provocatively attired people engaging in sexual activity or presenting themselves in explicit ways.
  2. Although pornography is often considered to be victimless and harmless, it is a significant sexual boundary violation for a number of reasons.
    - a. First, its whole purpose is the production of lust, which, in and of itself, is defined by the Bible as a sexual boundary violation.
      - (1) Job couldn't pick up a *Playboy* magazine and keep his covenant with his eyes.
      - (2) And neither can any of us.
    - b. Second, pornography is destructive of existing relationships.
      - (1) It is a form of infidelity.
      - (2) It leads its users to be unsatisfied with the real person they're stuck with in contrast to the young, beautiful, perfect, very willing, hand-picked models of which porn has an endless supply.
    - c. Third, pornography is addictive and can lead to self- and family-destructive behavior as the user tries to meet the craving for more.
      - (1) It can lead to behavior similar to that of alcoholics and drug addicts.
      - (2) It can deprive addicts and their families of much needed money, sleep, time, and common sense adjustment to life.
    - d. Fourth, pornography is depersonalizing as it teaches those who use it to see the objects of their lust not as persons but as the sum total of their sexually stimulating features and, worse yet, dismisses those who don't have those features as being without value.
      - (1) Plump, plain people just don't even register in the value system of pornography-driven people.
      - (2) I once had a jolting experience that drove the point of depersonalization home to me during 60's mini skirt craze.

- (3) I was heading up the stairs to class and enjoyed watching a fabulous pair of mini-skirted legs coming down the stairs—until I saw that they belonged to Marla.
  - (4) I was astonished by a wave of guilt which mystified me.
    - (a) I mean watching for short skirts and long legs was a national teenage male pastime during that era.
    - (b) So why should I all of a sudden feel so guilty?
  - (5) Over the years I've come to realize that it was because Marla, a strikingly beautiful natural blond, was in my small group and had become a good friend.
    - (a) One time in group she had talked about the burden of how people fixated on her beauty and didn't see her as a person.
    - (b) And here I, who was supposed to be her friend and accept her as a person, had done the exact same thing. I had depersonalized her into a set of legs.
  - (6) That's what porn encourages us to do, not only with its models, but also with the people with whom we come in contact each day—to see them primarily for their sexual attributes or their lack of sexual attributes, not for who they are as people.
- e. Fifth, pornography contributes to the sense that a person's value depends on the beauty of his or her body.
    - (1) We already struggle with that enough, and porn just makes it more intense.
    - (2) It drives eating disorders and a variety of other problems as people reach toward unattainable goals.
  - f. Sixth, pornography is a type of idolatry, turning physical form and the desires it creates into a god in our lives.
    - (1) We put perfect physical form on a pedestal.
    - (2) And we worship it, finding in it relief from the mundane routineness of everyday life.
3. Pornography is a huge problem in society and increasingly in the church.
    - a. And the internet has exploded the problem.
    - b. Studies show heavy involvement of church people with porn.
  4. Use of pornography is a very significant violation of God's sexual boundaries, and we Christians ought to be observing those boundaries.
- D. The fourth category of sexual boundary violations consists of the uncritical viewing of sexually suggestive material that is available in American culture.
1. Our society keeps stretching the boundaries of what is acceptable for viewing till much that is common fare in movies, television, novels, magazines, catalogues and advertisements verges on pornography.
  2. And many of us in the church have become so complacent that we accept it, view it and use it without question.
  3. Now I can't speak very knowledgeably about such things because in my

- maintaining my own sexual boundaries, I don't watch this stuff.
- a. I've never seen an episode of Sex in the City, or Desperate Housewives.
  - b. But from what I hear about these and similar programs it's clear that their popularity is based precisely on their sexual content.
4. What happens when we view such programming is that it desensitizes us to sexual boundary violations and constantly keeps us thinking about sexual agenda as the situations depicted keep cycling through our thoughts.
    - a. Some time ago what we thought was a safe movie surprised us with a surprising explicit sexual scene.
    - b. And it was astonishing to me how hard it was to not replay that scene over and over in my mind for the next several days.
    - c. Once an idea, especially a sexually stimulating one, is introduced to our thinking, it's very difficult to expel it from our thoughts.
  5. Now maybe the kind of thoughts we have isn't a big issue to many of us.
    - a. But it should be.
    - b. In Colossians 3 Paul calls us to *put to death sexual immorality, impurity, lust and evil desires and to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things.*
    - c. Paul expands on setting *our minds on things above* when he calls us in Philippians 4 to think about, *Whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, whatever is excellent or praiseworthy.*
    - d. These passages call us to turn our minds from thoughts of lust to more worthy thoughts and that's hard to do if you're watching stuff that is explicitly sexual.
  6. Watching this kind of programming is a violation of God's sexual boundaries, and we Christians ought to be observing those boundaries.
- E. The last category of sexual boundary violations has to do with how interactions with other people may contribute to lust either in them or in ourselves.
1. The first issue is how we uncover, package and present our own bodies.
    - a. Modest dress is a significant biblical issue.
      - (1) The OT insisted that the body be adequately covered.
      - (2) And the NT speaks of dressing modestly.
    - b. Yet fashion seems to constantly be pushing the boundaries on what is considered to be modest.
      - (1) I've recently been reading some stuff on how this is true even of young girls.
      - (2) Several authors have written books about the sexualization of children.
      - (3) I've read of parents complaining about not being able to find modest clothes for their four and five year olds.

- c. The church has long realized that fashion cannot be allowed to set the standards for appropriate dress, and has fought fashion for a long time, but it seems the church has caved in the last while.
- d. Today we pretty much follow the dictates of fashion.
  - (1) Even when there is too much skin being exposed.
  - (2) Even when tightness shows off too much form.
  - (3) Even when there is an attitude being expressed that is not in keeping with Christian principles.
- 2. The second issue is how we use our eyes.
  - a. We have the option of looking at and lusting over the suggestive things we encounter or of disciplining ourselves to not look.
    - (1) We see that in Job's covenant with his eyes—he was determined not to look and lust.
    - (2) I know from a lifetime of not doing very good with this one, that it's hard not to look at something that excites us and feels so good to see, but we can discipline our eyes.
  - b. We need to learn ways of turning our eyes from things at which we should not look.
- 3. I think Marla and I are a good illustration of both sides of this point about avoiding things that result in lust.
  - a. We were both at fault in the episode on the stairs.
  - b. I could have had my eyes better trained to not look so intently.
  - c. But she could have opted for a longer skirt.
- 4. How we dress and how we use our eyes can be a violation of God's sexual boundaries, and we Christians ought to be observing those boundaries.

- IV. Now I've listed five categories of ways in which we can violate sexual boundaries.
- A. Some, I would hope, we are all in agreement on.
    - 1. For example, abusive sex and recreational sex.
    - 2. I would imagine we're all in agreement on that.
  - B. But I suspect that there was a place as I moved through these five areas where you said, "Get real, Larry! There's no problem with that. I do that all the time."
    - 1. And, I know, I even reached that point myself.
    - 2. But yet I pushed as far as I did because I felt constrained by my regard for the scriptures and the progression of my thought processes to take things to their logical conclusion.
    - 3. Considering the grave way in which the Bible addresses lust, we may be way too relaxed about some of these issues.
  - C. I think there are many of us who need to stop and reexamine how we are doing with our sexual boundaries and to maybe conclude, "I've been a bit careless. I have perhaps gone further than I should have."
  - D. I want to conclude with a slight modification of Paul's *statement in Philipians 4:8 — Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is*

*admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—those are  
the things you should think about.*